

# Exhibit A-32

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# Conference Pledges \$5.4 Billion to Rebuild Gaza Strip

By MICHAEL R. GORDON OCT. 12, 2014

CAIRO — An international donor conference here on reconstructing Gaza garnered \$5.4 billion in pledges on Sunday. But even as diplomats highlighted the contributions, they warned that the effort to rebuild the Palestinian enclave could be jeopardized unless a diplomatic solution was found to break the cycle of violence between the militant group Hamas and Israel.

Borge Brende, the Norwegian foreign minister who played a role in organizing the conference, announced the total sum, which was boosted by a hefty \$1 billion contribution from Qatar. Half of the \$5.4 billion that was promised is to be used for rebuilding efforts in Gaza, while the remainder is intended to support the budget of the Palestinian Authority through 2017.

That sum is less than the \$8.5 billion Mahmoud Abbas, the president of the Palestinian Authority, had requested for both purposes. But Western officials noted that the contributions could grow since a number of nations like the United States made their pledges on an annual basis.

Ban Ki-moon, the United Nations secretary general, told the conference that there was an urgent need for the aid in Gaza, where almost a third of the population had been displaced by conflict. Even now, he said, electrical blackouts last up to 18 hours a day and more than 450,000 people do not have access to the municipal water supply.

“Gaza remains a tinderbox,” Mr. Ban said. “The people desperately need to see results in their daily lives.”

Still, diplomats said that any gains could be at risk unless progress was made toward a political settlement that reduced the likelihood that a conflict between Hamas and Israel might erupt yet again.

“We need a political process that is different from 2009 and 2012,” Mr. Brende said, referring to the reconstruction efforts that were undertaken only to be followed by another conflict.

“This is the third time in less than six years that together with the people of Gaza, we have been forced to confront a reconstruction effort,” Secretary of State John Kerry told the conference. “This is the third time in less than six years that we’ve seen war break out and Gaza left in rubble.”

In remarks to reporters on Sunday night, Mr. Kerry said that a political solution on Gaza — one that met Israel’s security needs as well as the Palestinians’ insistence that their political rights be respected — could not be fully achieved without progress toward a broader Middle East peace deal. And Mr. Kerry signaled that he had not given up on the idea of forging a comprehensive peace settlement between the Palestinians and Israelis even though talks between the two sides broke down last year.

“We do want to get back to them,” Mr. Kerry said. “We are not stopping. We are committed to continuing to put ideas on the table.”

Even as Mr. Kerry underscored the importance of a potential agreement for stability in Gaza and the region, however, he signaled that the Obama administration would not plunge into another round of Middle East diplomacy unless it sensed there was enough political will on the Israeli and Palestinian sides to try to make progress.

Though there was broad agreement here that Gaza has pressing humanitarian needs, there have been deep divisions over its future.

Turkey and Qatar have supported Hamas, but Egypt and Saudi Arabia have opposed the organization and, along with the United States, have been adamant that the reconstruction aid not be perceived as a reward to Hamas for stopping its rocket attacks against Israel.

Hamas and the Palestinian Authority have formed a unity government, but tensions between the two groups remain.

"Hamas had provided no indication that it is prepared to subsume its military authority to the Palestinian Authority," said Robert M. Danin, a senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations.

One subtext of the conference on Sunday was efforts by the United States and its Arab partners to boost the influence of the Palestinian Authority in Gaza.

"The Palestinian Authority and President Abbas must be empowered in all that we do in order to define and determine Gaza's future," Mr. Kerry told the conference. "We can and should see Palestinian Authority customs officials at Gaza's borders. We can and should help the P.A. to expand its control in Gaza."

Qatar signaled its interest in maintaining its influence in Gaza by making the largest pledge: \$1 billion. The United Arab Emirates, which has competed with Qatar for influence in the Middle East, promised \$200 million.

Among Western blocs, the European Union pledged \$568 million. Mr. Kerry pledged \$212 million in fresh aid, \$75 million of which will go for reconstruction efforts in Gaza, while the remainder will be directed to the Palestinian Authority, including programs in East Jerusalem and the West Bank.

David D. Kirkpatrick contributed reporting from Cairo, and Isabel Kershner from Jerusalem.

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